

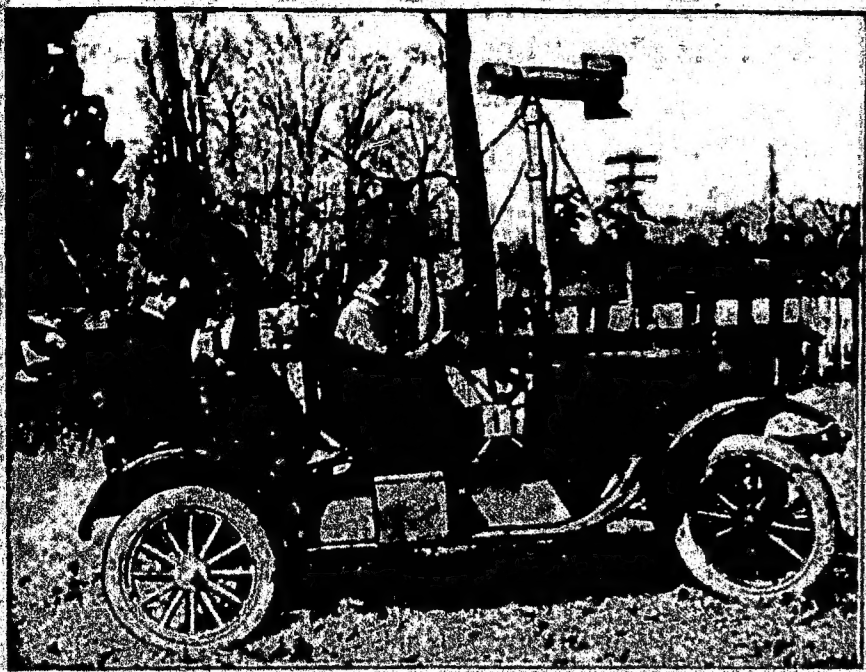








## OPERATING GOVERNMENT TEST CAR.



W. S. James and C. S. Bruce of the automobile power plant of the bureau of standards, driving the test car used to determine the power output of the engine, combustion valve of the fuel, wind resistance, etc. This car is also used in experiments to discover gasoline substitutes and is fitted with a camera which automatically records the fuel consumption.

## GRIME ON MOTOR CAUSE OF DECAY

Greasy Accumulations Injurious to Various Connections and Also to Insulation.

The motorcar's spring cleaning should not stop with the body, top and cushions. An engine and chassis covered with grease and dirt is a costly encouragement to delaying simple adjustments which will save money in repairs.

Clean the engine, springs, transmission housing and other parts which accumulate sticky grime with kerosene, to which some gasoline may be added. Use a wooden backed scrubbing brush with no metal on it. Metal may touch electric terminals and cause a spark which will start a fire. A much better job will result if the drip pan is removed while the engine is cleaned.

Cleaning Saves the Engine. In addition to looking better and being easier to repair, a clean engine's hose connections, electric insulation and gaskets will not deteriorate nearly so quickly.

With the springs cleaned, oiling suggests itself. Be sure the grease cups on the springs are full and screwed down so there will be pressure. That is not enough to save a rusted spring, however. Jack up the chassis and apply lubricant with a paint brush or a squirter.

If the leaves of springs are rusted together, they usually may be pried apart with a screwdriver while the car is jacked up. Repair men diagnose an a "frozen" spring a condition in which all leaves are rusted into what appears to be a solid mass. Soak the "frozen" spring in kerosene and try the screwdriver again next day.

Take Buggy Spring Apart. If the spring still balks, the best way is to remove it, take it apart, clean the leaves with kerosene, lubricate them with graphite and grease and reassemble them.

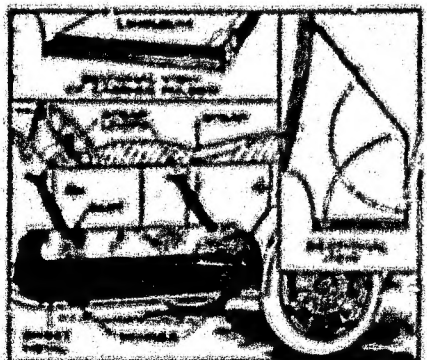
Spring covers of leather and metal, oil retaining cups and high pressure lubricating systems are among recent improvements which simplify care of springs. The various covers keep out dirt and keep in lubricants so that springs rarely need attention. High pressure devices range in design from those in which a screw pressure exerts terrific force to a handy affair like a pistol which "shoots" grease when the trigger is pulled.

## DEVICE HANDY FOR LUGGAGE

Two Strips of Iron Arranged on Running Board of Car Afford Storage Place.

The illustration shows a novel attachment devised by a motorist for carrying luggage on the running board of his car.

Two pieces of heavy sheet iron, slightly narrower than the running board, are hinged to each other, and one piece hinged to the outer edge of the running board, as shown. Two



Two Strips of Sheet Iron, Arranged as the Running Board, Provide an Excellent Attachment for Carrying Luggage, and Can Be Folded Down When Not in Use.

leather straps, attached as shown, are used to hold these pieces tightly over the luggage so that it will not be jolted out on rough roads. A piece of linoleum is glued to the outer side of the strip hinged to the running board, so that when the attachment is folded, the linoleum is uppermost.—Popular Mechanic Magazine.

## RETARDED SPARK IS INJURIOUS TO AUTO

Overheated Condition Harmful to Pistons, Cylinders and Other Parts of Engine.

(By William H. Stewart, Jr., President Stewart Automobile School.)

You have all seen the fellow who runs his "steaming" clanking car around town. It looks for all the world like a baby locomotive, but perhaps he does not know that this overheated condition injures the pistons, cylinders, bearings and all internal parts of the engine. Shortly he learns this for himself—after he has paid a big repair bill for information that could have been obtained from any instruction book.

If you run the car with the spark retarded, the engine will overheat and carbonize. A similar effect is caused by a crippled fan or an impeded water flow. If your engine overheats it is advisable to stop instantly and find the trouble. In an emergency a very wise thing to do is to pour an abundance of oil into the crank case. Your exhaust will smoke, but the additional oil will offer protection to the inside of the engine until relief is at hand.

Clean the belt occasionally and rid it of the oil and gummy matter. Hitch up your garden hose and send its spray through the openings in the radiator, which probably is clogged with mud. Do this from the engine side of the radiator; otherwise you may short circuit the electric system. As a further precaution see that all hose connections are good and not partially closed on the inside, thereby retarding the water flow. This clogging, though very slight, will retard radiation and cause trouble.

## GREASE RUSTY CAR SPRINGS

Jack Up Chassis and Apply Lubricant While Weight Is Off—Kerosene Cuts Rust.

Positive lubrication of springs may be secured without the purchase of additional accessories—jack up the chassis and apply lubricant while the springs are thus relieved of their weight. In this condition the spring leaves should open slightly in a fan shape. It may be necessary to spread the leaves a trifle with a screwdriver, knife, or any thin strip of metal. A few minutes' work with a squirt gun, filled with half kerosene and motor oil, will cut the rust and leave a film of lubricant between the leaves.

Sometimes a spring is rusted to the extent that it becomes "frozen" in a right mass. The only remedy is to take it apart, wash each leaf with kerosene and repack, inserting a heavy piece of wrapping paper thoroughly saturated with a good grade of graphite grease between each leaf.

## AUTOMOBILE GOSSIP

An ounce of instruction may save a pound of repair.

A weak clutch spring can be repaired temporarily by placing washers under it.

Nearly 2,500,000 workers are engaged in or directly affected by the automobile industry.

French automobile builders are experimenting with a car driven by the heavy oil remaining in petroleum after the extraction of kerosene.

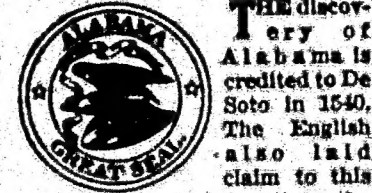
In some instances the stem of the water pump has become so worn, usually the annular grooves, that the pump cannot be packed to make it tight.

Skidding is probably one of the most common causes of automobile accidents. Yet, if the driver is careful, he should have no trouble from skidding.

Many cars are using excessive quantities of gasoline in the motor because of dragging brakes, caused by the brake mechanism being in such poor condition that the brakes do not fully release.

## The Story of Our States

By JONATHAN BRACE XXII.—ALABAMA



THE discovery of Alabama is credited to De Soto in 1540. The English also laid claim to this territory and included it in the grant to North Carolina. But it was the French who first settled here erecting in 1702 Fort St. Louis on Mobile Bay and founding the town of Mobile nine years later. Mobile was for many years the capital of Louisiana. France in 1763 ceded the territory east of the Mississippi to England and the northern part of the present State of Alabama was joined to the Illinois territory. The southern portion was known as West Florida. Serious conflict with the Indians was kept up for many years. In fact, even as late as 1812, there was an uprising of the Creeks which resulted in terrible atrocities and massacres.

During the Revolution West Florida remained loyal to England, but was seized by Spain only to be turned over to the United States in 1813. This Mobile section was then added to the northern district and the State of Alabama was formed and became the twenty-second state of the Union in 1819.

The meaning of the name Alabama is variously interpreted. It was the name of an Indian tribe which inhabited this territory at the time of De Soto's first visit. After this tribe the river was named and the state was called Alabama after the river. The Indian word was supposed to mean "Here we rest," and these words are used on the state's coat of arms, but this interpretation is doubtful and its real meaning is uncertain. Alabama is sometimes called the Plantation State. Its area is 51,903 square miles.

(By the National Newspaper Syndicate.)

Conrad W. Crocker's Liberal Republican League, which tried so hard to defeat Senator Lodge last fall, has gone out of business. Under a law which went into effect at that hour, no organization may use the name of a major political party, without proper authorization from the duly elected state committee of the party, and there is little likelihood that the Republican state committee will extend the hand of good fellowship to the Crocker organization. If the Liberal Republican League continues its activities, its officers run the risk of prosecution by the attorney-general.

The total number of federal income tax returns filed by individuals throughout the United States reporting incomes for the calendar year ended Dec. 31, 1921, was 6,652,176. The net income amounted to \$19,577,212,523 and the tax (normal tax and surtax) was \$719,237,104.

For the state of New Hampshire the number of returns was 32,410 which reported net income amounting to \$32,253,496 and tax (normal tax and surtax) \$1,152,330.

For the state of New Hampshire the falling off in the number of returns was 377 or 0.23 per cent, the reduction in the total net income amounted to \$15,079,643 or 15 per cent, and the decrease in tax (normal and surtax) was \$551,593 or 35.34 per cent.

Thirty-one physicians licensed to practice medicine in Connecticut have been required by the state health department to return the licenses issued to them, on the ground that they are illegal. They will not be permitted to continue to practice in the state. All of the doctors disqualified were illegally examined by the state eclectic medical examining board, according to an opinion given by Atty.-Gen. Healy.

A decline in the birth rate and a slight increase in the death rate in 1922 is shown in provisionally census bureau figures for the year by the department of commerce. For the 31 states reporting birth figures, the rate for 1922 was 22.7 for each 1000 of population, against a rate of 24.4 for 1921. For 32 states the death rate last year was 11.9, against 11.8 for 1921. North Carolina reported the highest birth rate, 25.2, while a rate of 18 for the state of Washington was the lowest.

Death rates in the 32 states ranged from 14.7 for Maine to 31 for Idaho.

Protecting that the savings recently affected on state printing by the Massachusetts commission on administration and finance were made at the sacrifice of union principles, the House Allied Printing Trades Council, at a meeting, voted to send a delegate to the state branch of the American Federation of Labor to introduce in that body a resolution calling for the awarding of all Massachusetts state printing to union printers only. The council also instructed its secretary, Daniel J. McDonald, to prepare a bill to this effect to be introduced in the state Legislature.

## ANDOVER

Miss Mary P. Clay of Portland has rented Mrs. Abbie Poor's house on Main Street.

Oscar Damon has been critically ill for several days.

Mr. and Mrs. Willis Kilgore of Norway were calling on friends Sunday.

Mr. Freeman Bedell, who has spent several days with his sister, Mrs. Y. A. Thurston and family, returned to his home in Allston, Mass., Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Melsner are rejoicing over the birth of a daughter, Saturday, June 2, who has been named Sylvia Kathleen.

The Ladies' Aid of the Congregational church was entertained Wednesday afternoon by Mrs. Irving Akers.

John F. Talbot and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Milton returned from Franklin, Mass., Friday, where they attended the commencement exercises of the class of 1923, Dean Academy. Their daughter, Miss Tressa Milton, was the class valedictorian.

Miss Athalee Sweatt, who was graduated from Farmington Normal School last week, is at her home for the summer vacation.

Rev. and Mrs. John Suter returned from Boston, Sunday. Roger Thurston drove them from Portland in their new car.

Oliver and Florence Akers, who teach school in Rumford, are at their homes for the summer vacation.

Frank Beam and Jasper Diggers are working in Waterford.

The Ladies' Aid will serve a supper in the hall Wednesday, June 27, from 6 to 7:30 o'clock.

Mrs. Lucien Akers visited her daughter, Mrs. Villa Merrill, and family at Rumford Point, Thursday.

Mrs. Minnie Akers from Portsmouth, N. H., is visiting her daughter, Mrs. Edward Pratt.

Mrs. Abbie Poor is staying at the Merrill house during the absence of Mrs. Poor.

Rev. C. W. Robinson will deliver the Pythian sermon in Cabot Lodge, K. of P., on Sunday, June 24, at 2:30 p. m. The Pythian Sisters of Ellis Glen Temple are invited to attend.

Mr. and Mrs. Y. A. Thurston, Mr. Arthur Lang, Mrs. C. A. Andrews, Mrs. Dolly Elliott and daughters, Mrs. Arthur Stevens, and Marie Elliott, Annie Akers, Mrs. Minerva Sweatt, Ira Thurston, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bailey, Miss Sadie Bailey and Rev. C. W. Robinson attended the Conference of Congregational Churches at Rumford Point, Thursday.

Miss Mary Clay of Portland, of the State Board of Foreign Missions, will speak at the Congregational church Sunday evening, June 24.

All the stores in town will close Thursday afternoon until November.

Miss Doris Ripley is at home from Melford, Mass., where she is attending Tufts College.

Mrs. William Cutting and sons are at the Lakes for a short vacation.

The Happy Five Orchestra furnished music for a dance at West Bethel last Thursday evening.

"Children's Day" was observed at the Congregational church, Sunday morning with a concert given by the children of the Sunday School. Mrs. Milton Crossman had charge of it and deserves much praise for her efficient work in training the class. Following is the program, each number which was duly rendered:

Song, School  
Responsive Reading, School  
Prayer, School  
Song, Henry Perkins  
Greeting, School  
Song, Alize Milton, Olive Crossman  
Recitation, Roberta Thurston

## ADDLE DUNN

Song, School  
Recitation, Helen Roberts  
Exercise, Six Girls  
Song, School

Recitation, Minerva Pratt  
Song, Constance Thomas, Helen Hall  
Exercise, Five Girls

Duet, Della Thurston, Olive Akers  
Recitation, Geneva Dunn  
Song, School

Remarks, Mr. Robinson  
Collection, School  
Song, School

## NORTH NEWRY

Mr. and Mrs. Blon Wing and daughter, Luella, and Mrs. Hannah Wing of Phillips, Me., were week end guests of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Wight.

Mrs. Daisy Morton has bought the tea room at Screw Auger Falls and it will be open to the public every Sunday.

Miss Carrie Wight has purchased a new Ford touring car.

Mr. and Mrs. Frances Knapp of Byron and Mr. Knapp's father, E. G. Knapp, were callers at L. E. Wight's.

Mr. and Mrs. Steven Lord were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Morton, Sunday.

Fred Sawyer and family of Auburn and Yada Hanscom of Bethel were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Hanscom.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Kilgore and Miss Ferol Brink went to Bath, Friday.

The regular meeting of Bear River Grange was postponed Saturday night, as the members had been invited to visit Upton Grange. There were fifteen attended and all report a splendid time.

After the literary program, consisting of music, recitations, and a farce, also a speaker, the meeting was closed, and ice cream and cake were served. A number of members from Umbagog Grange of Krol were present.

Jesse Ferren is driving stage this week.

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Foot freedom good looks long wear

So cool and comfortable you hardly know you're wearing them—Correct to the last detail in line and finish—Built of the finest materials to give long, hard service.

That's why Keds are the most popular summer shoes.

We carry a complete line of genuine Keds. Come in and select your Keds today.

Allen's Shoe Store  
Bethel, Maine

WANTED—We will pay 5 cents per pound for clean rags suitable for washing presses. Citizen Office, Bethel, Me.

While in town SATURDAY, June 23d, to see the TWIN TOWNS' opening baseball game with the PORTLAND K. of C., call at this store and have your feet examined for foot troubles.

FREE EXAMINATION  
A relief for tired, aching feet.

BASEBALL NEWS  
THURSDAY, JUNE 28th  
FARMINGTON AT TWIN TOWNS

E. N. SWETT SHOE CO.  
NORWAY, MAINE Phone 38-2

FOR SALE  
Cedar Posts and Stakes

INQUIRE OF  
BARTLETT BROS., Bethel, Me.

L. F. PIKE CO.

Men's Clothing Stores

It's Variety You Want

when selecting your suit.

WE HAVE IT HERE IN ABUNDANCE.

Variety of Style - Colors - Fabrics

You will find in OUR TWO STORES and a tailor always ready to fit them to you as you like and no extra charge.

Our clothes are made by the best makers and guaranteed to us and you.

Many of our customers travel thirty to fifty miles to trade with us. If they do why not you?

TRY IT NEXT TIME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.  
SUITS \$16.50 and up to \$40

ASK TO SEE

The Wonderful Clothcraft Specials, \$27

PALM BEACH and the NEW GABARDINE SUMMER SUITS  
ready now for you to see.

NORWAY

Blue Stores

SO. PARIS















# Gift of the Desert



by  
Randall Parrish

If the surviving frontiersmen of America are to form a society, there is a lot to be learned from the life of a man like Randall Parrish.



Randall Parrish.

Parrish's experience with the West goes back to 1879, when he entered upon the practice of law in a portion of Kansas, still a territory. Parrish and his wife, who was a daughter of Emerson Hough, were a distinguished couple. Parrish was a writer of considerable note, and his work was a study of the old West and even accompanied "its" frontiersmen. Parrish is one of the few remaining frontiersmen of the old West, and his work was a study of the old West and even accompanied "its" frontiersmen.

## CHAPTER I

### The Choice.

It was a wonderful thing to be twenty-three, full of hope and ambition, and in the wide out-of-doors; more wonderful still to possess the glorious memory of nearly two years in the hospitals of France, six months of that time just behind the American fighting line. Yet the girl was not thinking of this then as she sat there alone at the edge of the ravine, gazing silently at across the dull leagues of desert to where a distant blue range of mountains cut off the view with their ragged summits, while arching over all hung the clear Arizona sky, slowly turning to purple.

She compared that sun-kissed vista with other sunsets in France and Germany, when the ground was yet red with the blood of sacrificed manhood. Her heart ached with the sad memory that would not die—hours of toil, scenes of suffering. But this mood had also passed away, and now, although her eyes were still upon that outspread, picture below, her thought had centered upon the present in a dull wonderment at the strange situation surrounding her. Why had she ever listened to the plea of old Tom Meager, back there in Chicago, and finally, partially from pity, partially from that new love of adventure considered within her by service across the water, agreed to come west with him? Of course, she never had dreamed what it really would be like—life on this vast isolated ranch along the southern border, with the drear desert stretching away on every side from this little oasis of water and grass. Tom Meager had never told the whole story; he had dwelt on the loneliness of his sick wife, the chance she had of regaining health, with proper nursing and care; the rare beauty of the sunset, the wonderful glow of the good desert night, the wild, free existence of the range, filled with excitement and a dash of danger. It all had appeared to her strange—this service, the complete change in environment, the escape from the burdensome life of the Marine hospital. The day was quiet, the opportunity excellent, and she had said "yes" without half-realizing then what it all meant.

But she realized now. These first few weeks had been nothing less than a dream. She found everything new, attractive, tinged with romance and color. She liked Mrs. Meager, and discovered her task to be an easy one, her time largely at her own disposal. But it was lonely, terribly lonely; and, after those first few weeks, nothing seemed to occur to break the dull monotony. It was sixty miles away a half-obliterated desert trail to the nearest town, and that little more than a general store and a cattle corral. The only link between there and the civilization she had left to the eastward were the glistering rails of the railroad.

Day by day, week following week, she saw the same faces, heard the same voices. Riders from the outer range came in with their reports, bringing the tales of Mexican raiders or of cattle strayed into the desert.

Whenever she could she rode about with old Tom Meager, in and out the ravines, and occasionally far beyond into the vast sand plains, listening to his quaint tales of adventures, and helping him round up bunches of strayed stock. She became expert in the saddle, learned to use a gun skillfully, and even picked up some knowledge of the lariat. Thus, little by little, she adapted herself to the rough life, determined to keep her word, but nevertheless growing constantly more and more heartless.

Then Tom Meager came to his death. Riding home alone from Nogales at night, in the dark of Silver canyon, his horse slipped and fell, and Meager lay there on the rock motionless. A packer found his body the next day, and brought it on to the ranch. In some way the message of the old man's passing crossed the border line down far into old Mexico, until it reached the ears of his son, God alone knows where. Three days after the burial this wanderer of many years returned, drove his saddle horse into the corral, and assumed control. Whatever might be his legal right, there was none to oppose his bold assumption of authority or management. The widow lay helpless on her bed; she was not the boy's mother, and he never so much as crossed the threshold of her room. If there had been a will, no one searched for it, or made inquiries. By sheer force and audacity Bob Meager took command, asking permission of no one.

For some days after his arrival the girl did not even encounter this new master. From dawn to dark he was in the saddle, familiarizing himself with every detail of his new possessions. She had no desire to meet him, for long ago his story had been told to her—not by old Tom, who never spoke his son's name, or the patient, invalid wife, but by others, long in the Meager service, glad now of an opportunity to gossip with a stranger. It was a story of brutal shame; of base ingratitude, verging on crime; of sudden disappearance; of vague rumors floating back from here and there, bearing the tale of a wild, disreputable life. To her Bob Meager had become the synonym of all that was evil in this borderland. Yet now, through some strange play of fate, he was here and she was left helplessly in his power, under his orders, wholly dependent on him for employment. The thought was almost maddening.

They finally met the morning of the fifth day, unexpectedly, when, without even knocking, the fellow strode into the widow's room unceremoniously.

The girl, in her nurse's uniform, arose hastily to her feet, and confronted the rude intruder indignantly, her eyes blazing with sudden antagonism.

"Who are you?" he asked gruffly,



"Who Are You?" the Asked Gruffly.

just with a promise of comfort in the town. "Some poor relation?" "Not quite as bad as that," she answered, resenting his manner, yet endeavoring to control her speech. "I am Mrs. Meager's nurse."

"Nurse?" he roared mechanically. "Good Lord, so the old man stood for that, did he? Well, you can hardly expect me to say it is more than my mother ever had. Do you know who I am?"

Meager's nurse, you said? Pretty soft job, isn't it? I don't believe there will be any necessity for her having a nurse very long. What's your name?" "Deborah Meredith."

He laughed, showing a row of cruel white teeth. "Sounds like a story book; where did the old man pick you up?" "My home is in Chicago."

"Well, he certainly showed good taste, I'll say that for him. You are some good-looking, Deborah Meredith. I'm d-d if I don't rather like your style."

He stared at her insolently, his glance appraising form and features much as he might take in the points of some animal he contemplated purchasing. The girl's face flushed indignantly, but her eyes never fell.

"You sure do look good to me," he announced finally, "and I don't believe I'll fire you—not yet, anyhow."

"It will not be at all necessary," she said quietly. "I shall attend to that for myself."

"You mean you will quit?"

"I certainly shall."

"Oh, h—ll! Spunky little tigress, ain't you? I reckon I'll have something to say about that."

"You mean you will compel me to remain whether I wish to or not?" she asked in surprise. "Why, that cannot be done; I am not a slave."

"It can't be? Do you know where you are?"

"Certainly I do."

"By G—d, I doubt it. This is the Meager ranch in Arizona. There ain't another outfit within fifty miles, and nothing else round us but desert; there ain't no water, and no grass. I'm a-runin' things here, and you bet I know how to run them. You get me? I'm the boss; before another week's out every white man on this ranch will be hunting a job, and there'll be Mex in their places. I know how to handle Mex; they'll do what I say—you bet they will. So Miss Deborah Meredith, how is it you're going to quit before ever I say you can? Ain't no hoof it across the alkali to Nogales? Ten miles of that stuff would break your heart. You better think it over."

She saw him clearly in the light of the window, and in spite of her natural courage, the girl's heart sank. Was there any act of brutality the man would be incapable of? He was big, burly, with broad shoulders and a deep chest, almost a giant of a man, but it was the face which bespoke his character. Brute was written plainly all over it, seemingly impressed on every feature, yet at the moment she did not fear him; instinctively she felt the coward skulking back of his brutishness.

"I prefer," she said quietly, "not to discuss the matter now. Surely this was not why you came in here?"

"I sure like your nerve, little girl," he admitted admiringly. "No, I didn't come exactly for that, but whatever brought me I've changed my mind. We'll let things go on just as they are at present, I reckon. But don't you ever imagine I am playing with you; law don't count for much out here, sister, an' what I say goes."

She watched him as he turned and went out the door, her hands clenched, a wave of intense hatred surging over her. Yet in another moment she had conquered herself, and moved quietly back to the side of the bed on which her patient lay sobbing. She bent above the distressed woman.

"He is worse even than I thought," she said, unable wholly to hide her distress. "What caused him to come in here, do you suppose?"

"He came to send me away," answered the other clasping the girl's hands. "I knew it would not be long; he has disliked me always."

"Send you away! Why, you were his father's wife. Even if there was no will you must have dower rights in the estate. Surely, that is the law."

"I—I do not know," wearily. "Tom never explained anything to me, but I am afraid of Bob Meager. Don't cross him; don't anger him. He is dangerous, and I am afraid of him, for your sake as well as my own."

"What do you want me to do?" the girl questioned, influenced by the timidity of the other. "Let that beast have his own way with me?"

"No—no, not that. But—don't treat him fairly, Miss Meredith. He will not always be so to his today. As he said, you cannot fight or run away. All depends on winning his favor. Then sometimes there will be a chance. We must wait and watch, until he is in a mood to let us both go. But even if there was a way for you to escape, you could not leave me here in his power."

"You fear him like that?"

"I am afraid of the man and the fate he has left me. My life is worth nothing—I know that."

And Deborah Meredith, looking down into the white face lying off the pillow, made her choice.

## CHAPTER II

### Meager Wins His Plan.

It was the testimony of this woman's promise to Mrs. Meager, and her dislike of Bob Meager—which left the girl unconscious of the desert view strewn below, and thoughtful of the descending night. She had sought this spot to be alone, to escape any possibility of encountering Tom, and to turn over once more to her mind the conditions which had made her a prisoner. There had been an expression in the man's eyes that had frightened her more than she would even confess to herself—an insistent boldness, a sneering dominance which haunted her memory with its sinister threat. He was playing with her as a cat plays with a mouse, biding the proper time to strike. He knew he could afford to wait; that she

was utterly in his power. His very silence and aloofness increased her alarm, her dread of the morrow.

Not a day passed without witnessing a change in the personnel of the ranch. She might not have observed this, but for her own personal suspicion. Old Tom Meager would never employ a Mexican on the place, nor trust them; but now, one by one, the old hands disappeared, while swarthy skinned riders appeared mysteriously to take their places. Within six days the transformation was practically complete, and Bob Meager was surrounded by those of his own kind.

Creations of his will, denizens of that world he knew best. This change was to Deborah's mind ominous of evil; it increased her fear, and rendered more difficult any possibility of escape. The walls closed her more tightly in. What did this man plan to do with her? The question could not be answered; she could only wait fearfully for his actions to make reply. Yet it must be evil; she could conceive nothing else in Bob Meager's heart.

Her thought was not with the wild desert scene outstretched before her, or the beauty of that red sunset behind those far-off peaks. She was not even conscious of her more immediate surroundings, remaining totally oblivious to the solitary horseman, approaching along the barely discernible trail skirting the edge of the mesa. The horse was moving slowly, with wearily drooping head, and on the hard-beaten sand the hoofs made no noise sufficient to disturb her. It was on the farther edge of the chaparral that the horseman suddenly perceived the girl, her white skirt showing conspicuously in the purple light, and quickly held up his pony. She had evidently neither seen nor heard his approach, and he swung silently over the animal's head, before advancing toward her on foot. It was not until he had reached within a very few yards of her position that Deborah became aware of some presence near, and arose instantly to her feet, facing him in sudden alarm. It was too late then to flee; the man blocked the only path available.

"Frightened you, didn't it?" he asked carelessly, glancing at her with his quirk, but with searching eyes on her face. "You must have been in some daydream, I'll say."

"I—I was thinking," she answered, a little catch in the voice, but as instantly determining to tell the truth, and thus learn, if possible, his purpose, "of what you intend to do with me. I—I cannot continue to bear things as they are."

"Why, they are not so bad, are they?" he asked provocatively, but making no effort to advance. "This is the same ranch to which you came voluntarily; I have not cut down your wages, and the food, and all that, is just as good. Do you mean you don't like it here any longer?"

"I certainly do not under the circumstances. I am no longer here of my own free will."

"Oh, is that it? Well, perhaps we can remedy that trouble. Sit down there again while we talk it over."

"I prefer to stand."

"All right then, only it ain't going to do you no good to be offhand about it. I'll tell you that at the start. You ought to know by this time that I ain't the playing sort. Found any way to leave yet? I reckon not, or you wouldn't be here. Well, that lesson ought to mean something to you. I've left you alone for three days now, just to let it sink in."

"That I could not escape from here without assistance?"

"Sure; there ain't no way for a woman—a tenderfoot—to get across that desert without help of some kind, and a horse. I reckon you are smart enough to know that. It was mostly on your account I sent them old punchers away, an' got a lot o' Mex in to ride herd, an' do whatever old jobs were needed. There ain't nobody round who cares a whoop in h—ll what happens. You better let that sink in, too, first of all. Then it'll be easier for us to come to an understanding."

"An understanding?" she asked in surprise. "You desire to explain, then? Yet first you threaten me?"

He laughed.

"Threaten, h—ll! I don't have to threaten; I'm holding all the cards." He took a step forward, and, as the girl drew slightly back from his approach, his face quickly darkened with anger. "You don't want me to touch you, hey? or come near you? All right, I'll wait, but let me tell you, you'll do just what I tell you to. Sit down there on that log. You hear me standing?"

She took the place designated, remaining the while unconscious of refusal, while he remained standing, with one foot lazily planted on the log beside her.

"Very well," she said, looking a strange mixture into her eyes. "I will listen to what you have to say."

"Listen! I rather guess you will. I like you d—n well, but you've had me for a d—n nerve myself. Now, we here, Miss Deborah Meredith. A week ago I didn't even know you existed. Now, after we had that little scene together the other day in the old lady's room, I made up my mind that I was going to give you a lesson. You didn't like me, did you?"

He stopped, but she did not answer, although her eyes met his own.

"Come on! talk up. I know you didn't; but I want to hear you say so."

"It certainly is true."

"Surely it is. Why in h—ll wouldn't it be? The old man had liked you, didn't he?"

"Your father never once spoke of you to me."

"Then my precious stepmother did."

"Only in reply to some questions."

but nevertheless, I knew. If it is necessary for me to answer, I will—I do not like you, Bob Meager."

"The man grinned almost cheerfully. "Some fellows might get mad at that, but I don't. I rather enjoy it. Why? Because it's got you where it don't make any d—n difference. That's why. As long as I want you, I'm going to have you. I don't care what you think of me. Likely I'm even worse than that; but from the first minute I seen you in that white uniform, I made up my mind you was the girl I wanted; and I made up my mind, too, that it wasn't any use of my trying to make love to you—not a d—n bit. You'd just laugh at that. So I went to work and figured out another way."

"To get me?" in growing horror. "To get me? For what?"

"Oh, it's all going to be honorable, so don't let that worry you now. This is going to be a square deal, only I handle the cards—see? The first thing I had to do was to build a hog-tight fence around this ranch, so you couldn't get out. I ain't been bothering you any meanwhile. I ain't spoken to you since that first time. There wasn't no use. I saw in your eye what sort o' girl you was, and just about what you thought o' me. But I'd made up my mind what I was after, and how I was going to get it. I didn't have any notion of coming to you again until I had the cards stacked—see?"

"And—and now you—you are ready to play, and have come?"

"Correct. I can't lose. You got to do what I say, whether you like it or not. Maybe you don't just get this straight? Well, listen. In the first place I am Bob Meager, and I reckon, you never heard nothin' very soft about me. It's pretty generally known around here that I am a he-man, and that I usually get what I go after. You know that, don't you?"

"I—I have heard of your methods—yes."

"I thought most likely you had. Well, that's one point. The second point is, I'm the real boss of this ranch; it's mine, and I've got the let-

ters to prove it. Now, do you get the picture?"

It was almost dark, but she could still distinguish his face; as he leaned forward peering at her. There was no doubt as to the real meaning of the man, and she comprehended fully her own helplessness of resistance. All she could hope to do now was to cause delay, to thus win a chance to think and act.

"Yes," she managed to say, marveling at the calmness with which she spoke, and now on her feet facing him. "I think I know what you mean. You have me completely in your power; you have planned it all out."

"That's the ticket. Now there ain't no use your getting mad. I like you; I like you awfully well, and I'm going to be mighty square with you. But there wasn't any other way for me to get you—was there?"

"No," she said frankly, "there was no other course possible."

"Which means you don't like me at all?"

"It means all of that, and more, Bob Meager. I do not believe I ever despised anyone so much in my life as I do you. I despised you before I ever saw you; now I hate the very ground you walk on. Have you any use for me after that?"

"You just bet I have," he grinned. "You're sure a wildcat, but I'll tame you. D—n it! I like it in you; you're the wisest-wisest kind. One of us has got to be boss; I saw that from the very first, and that's what this means now; I'm going to be the one."

"In what way do you mean?"

"Haven't you got the idea yet? I'm going to marry you—see? I took the notion the first time I saw you—you're exactly my style. But I know'd then there wasn't but one way to do it. Now I'm ready to talk business. How is it, my lady? Going to be nice about it?"

She endeavored to rally her courage, even attempting a laugh.

"Marry you? Not in this world. I know you are a scoundrel, but I never thought you were a fool before."

"No, and you never will again," his voice hardened. "Because you will have no chance. It is nothing to me whether you say yes or no. I been down in Nogales today, an' among

other things I got a marriage license. It's right here in my pocket, an' the names written in it are 'Robert Meager and Deborah Meredith.' And that ain't all; sometime between now and ten o'clock a justice of the peace is going to drive us here to do up the business for us. That's why I'm telling you all this—so you can settle brace up and get ready."

She made no attempt to move or to speak; she seemed paralyzed, staring at him through the gathering darkness.

"I ain't going to touch you now," he went on sullenly, angered by her silence. "But you just think it over, and go on back to the house. When I send for you, you better come; that's all."

He turned, and walked back to his horse, and she stood there, trembling in every limb, as he vanished amid the shadows.

She understood now, clearly, definitely, just what she was called upon to face. Bob Meager had not minced his words, or left anything to imagination. He had planned this deliberately, in cold blood, and he had the will, and, perhaps, the power, to carry it out.

At first she was in a white flame of indignation; she even laughed hysterically at the fellow's threat. It seemed preposterous, absurd, a dream of delirium. Marry him! Marry that degenerate brute! Why, she would rather die a hundred deaths than have him even touch her. He was a foul, brutal cur! Yet even as she realized this, shrinking in terror from any possible contact with him, there arose in her mind a sense of fear, a grim, persistent fear she could not conquer.

He was ruthless, merciless. If he truly desired her, nothing would be permitted to stand in his way. He had not been drinking when he talked with her; he had spoken soberly and with full knowledge of what he said. Fiendish as it was, he had acted deliberately and in cold blood. That made it all the more dangerous, for he would likely drink now and become an utter fiend. Within an hour he would be raging drunk, capable of any indignity, any wild act. A brute sober, he became a demon drunk. And she must face it—alone! This was the conviction that slowly took full possession of her mind. His threat was not an idle one. He could turn contemptuously away and leave her there, completely confident that she could not escape. There was no spot of safety to which she could fly, no friend to whom she could appeal.

She gazed hopelessly out into the black void; not a light gleamed anywhere except from those distant stars overhead. There was but one way leading across that expanse, one way trail connecting with the pass through the mountain canyon beyond. There might, of course, be others—known to Indians or outlaw—but this path was the only one she ever had traveled. And it never could be traversed alone on foot.

Yet, was there any other hope of escape—of postponement even? To appeal to Bob Meager would accomplish nothing. She knew the damn heart of the man now if she never had before; he would only laugh, whether she came to him with reproaches or tears. And there was no one else—not a single white man left on the estate to her knowledge; not an officer of the law nearer than Nogales. The justice of the peace who was coming out to marry them! Hah! Whoever he was, he would assuredly be a creature of Meager's own choosing. No other kind would be employed under the circumstances. And Mrs. Meager would only break down and cry; under no conditions could she be of the slightest service, her terror of her stepson was the real cause of her nervous breakdown.

No, there was absolutely no one to rely upon but herself. And what could she do? The girl stood up in the darkness, her hands gripped, her eyes on the opening through the chaparral leading toward the house—the trail along which Bob Meager had disappeared. She must follow him; there was nowhere else for her to go. She must face this thing alone, with all the desperate courage she could muster. If the worst came she must act, swiftly, decisively—even to killing the monster. There was no other choice left, no other possibility of escape. But where could she procure a weapon? She possessed none of her own; had never dreamed of owning such a thing, yet they were plentiful enough about the ranch. Surely now could easily be secured.

Impelled by this thought of self-defense, realizing clearly that she could thus nowhere else with any hope of escaping this dilemma; that she could neither turn the place nor find assistance, Deborah, the color high in her cheeks, her lips firmly pressed in determination, advanced resolutely through the darkness toward the house. She would defend herself at all hazards; before she would submit to that brute she would shoot to kill. (To be continued.)

**GRAFTON PLANTATION**

Frank Douglas has a new dump truck. Mrs. Douglas is boarding eight read men.

Moore Cave bridge is to be rebuilt at once.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry McCafferty were week end guests of Mrs. G. M. Walker and family. Little Yate McCafferty has been there for the past week.

Joe Chapman has been doing quite a lot of farming at the Moore place.

Club Chapman was a Sunday caller at L. P. Walker's.

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